

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

August 12, 2019

Steven Dillingham, Director
U.S. Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road
Hillcrest Heights, MD 20746

Dear Director Dillingham:

We are writing to express our concerns with the upcoming 2020 Decennial Census, as it pertains to the State of Illinois. A full and fair count is imperative to ensure that each state receives the accurate amount of federal funding as well as proportional representation in Congress. With administrative and technological changes being made to the upcoming Census, the Bureau must provide Illinois with the necessary resources to count all Illinois residents, especially vulnerable and hard-to-count populations.

According to Forefront's 'IL Count Me In 2020' initiative, Illinois stands to lose at least \$1,800 per year for each person who goes uncounted—for a full decade until the next Decennial Census. Undercounting is most likely to occur among hard-to-count populations, which typically include low-income households, people of color, immigrants, rural communities, areas without broadband or Internet service, undocumented individuals, the homeless, renters, and children under the age of five.

While we are pleased to see the addition of online and phone response platforms, as well as translation assistance available in more than 50 non-English languages, the importance of physical presence and follow-up cannot be overstated. Local hiring efforts are imperative in understanding and building trust within hard-to-count communities, and they are more proficient in assisting their own community members to complete the Census questionnaire. As such, we believe the services and outreach provided by Area Census Offices (ACOs) in Illinois, as well as local hiring efforts for their staff members, are crucial to the communities they assist.

Should the Bureau plan to reduce the number of Illinois ACOs, we would strongly urge it to employ other field resources, such as increasing the amount of Questionnaire Assistance Centers (QACs) located at trusted community centers like libraries or recreation centers—particularly in communities with historically low response rates or lack of broadband or Internet access. This can ensure the Bureau is responsive to the needs of Illinois' most vulnerable communities.

With these concerns in mind, we would appreciate timely responses to the following:

- 1) How many ACOs will be open in Illinois for the 2020 Decennial Census, and how does this compare to the number of Illinois ACOs for the 2010 and 2000 Decennial Censuses; and how did the Census Bureau decide upon this number of ACOs?

- 2) Does the Bureau plan to open a greater number of Questionnaire Assistance Centers or deploy other field resources to compensate for any reduction in Illinois ACOs?
- 3) What is the Bureau's plan for contacting and following up with individuals in communities that lack broadband or Internet access? Will it prioritize these communities when considering the placement of ACOs and QACs?
- 4) Which local, state, and national partners will the Census Bureau be working with to identify and communicate with hard-to-count communities and individuals?
- 5) What details, both generally and specific to Illinois, can the Bureau share about its plan for hard-to-count populations?
- 6) How can our offices help to connect local institutions like churches and civic organizations with the Bureau to bolster its partnership programs, which aim to improve Census participation within hard-to-count communities?
- 7) Has the Bureau engaged, or will it engage, in local hiring efforts when choosing Census field workers or office staff?
- 8) Who is the main contact(s) for the Bureau's operations in Illinois, and how can our staff reach them?

Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to ensuring a full and fair count in Illinois for the 2020 Decennial Census. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



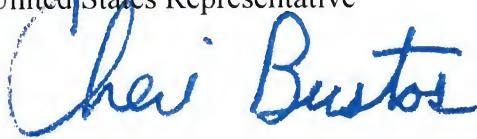
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



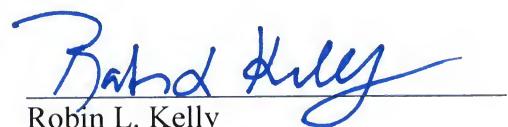
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Bobby L. Rush
United States Representative



Cheri Bustos
United States Representative



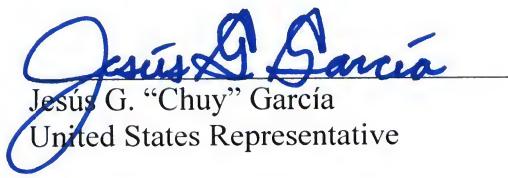
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Bradley S. Schneider
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